Norms for use of pesticides in soft drinks

†*191. SHRIMATI SAVITA SHARDA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Committee constituted for setting norms for the use of pesticides in soft drinks has not taken any decision in this regard, so far;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) by when a decision is likely to be taken by the Committee in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) to (c) Setting norms for presence of pesticide in soft drinks comes under the purview of the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act and Rules framed thereunder, which is administered by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. This Ministry has constituted a National Level Expert Group under the Chairmanship of Director General, Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) for recommending the maximum limits of pesticide residues in carbonated water. The report of the Expert Group is awaited.

Financial assistance to fishermen

*192. SHRI THENNALA G. BALAKRISHNA PILLAI: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that a number of Indian fishing boats have been held up in Pakistan;

(b) if so, whether Government have any scheme to assist such fishing boat owners through financial assistance;

(c) if so, the details thereof, and if not, the reasons therefor;

(d) the steps taken to cover such Indian fishermen through an insurance scheme like the crop insurance, etc;

(e) the details of steps taken by the Central Government to help Indian fishing sector facing such obstacles;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(f) whether Fisheries Division has taken any step to arrange a meeting on this matter; and

(g) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) Yes, Sir. There are about 198 fishing boats in Pakistan which were detained between October, 2003 and April 2005.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Detention of fishing boats occurs due to their crossing into Pakistani waters. The thrust of the Government's efforts has been to secure early release of apprehended fishermen.

(d) It would not be possible to have an insurance scheme to cover losses arising out of crossing into another country's waters.

(e) Under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Safety of Fishermen at Sea the fishermen having mechanised boats are provided with financial assistance for installation of Global Positioning System (GPS) and wireless set. The financial assistance is equal to 20% of the cost limited to Rs. 30,000 per vessel.

These equipments can help the fishermen from not straying into waters of neighbouring countries. The fishermen can also maintain communication with shore.

(f) and (g) Ministry of External Affairs being the nodal Ministry in this regard has been taking up on a regular basis with the Pakistani authorities the release of the apprehended fishermen. In an Inter-Ministerial meeting held in January, 2005, all the concerned State/UT Governments and related associations were advised to ensure that the fishermen confine fishing activities to Indian waters and are sensitized to the perils of violation of maritime borders including possible loss of boats.

Authority for disease surveillance

*193. SHRI R.K. ANAND: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that his Ministry had announced setting up a separate authority for disease surveillance to monitor and check the